

## PARENTS CORNER

### *When Children Need Professional Help*

Just as it is sometimes difficult to tell the difference between grief and depression, it is also difficult to tell the difference between normal childhood grief and a grieving child who needs special help. An actively grieving parent is often less able to see and respond to a child's needs.

**A child in need of professional help may display the following behaviors:**

- Inability to talk about or mention the loss of the loved one
- Extreme guilt, denial, disbelief, fear, anger or despair that leads to an inability to return to daily routines
- Marked changes in personality, including extreme hostility or withdrawal
- Behavior similar to their loved one who died or compulsive caregiving toward family and friends
- Expression of anger in unhealthy ways; examples include fighting at school, mistreating animals, accident-prone behavior and threatening suicide
- Excess or lack of sleep
- Changes in appetite that produce weight gain or loss
- Persistent physical symptoms such as an upset stomach or illness that a doctor cannot attribute to a physical problem
- Lack of attention or new fear at school, resulting in dramatic decline in academic performance
- Delinquency
- Drug or alcohol use

Many children will show some of these symptoms and behavior changes after a loss, but the intensity and duration of the symptoms will be greater when the grief is more complicated.

When combined with the above symptoms, or if serious on their own, the following circumstances may complicate a child's grieving process:

- Child had either a difficult or overly close relationship with the deceased
- Child has a difficult relationship with remaining family members



- Child is being asked to take over the role of the parent or sibling who has died
- News of the death was kept from the child for a long time or the child was told lies about the death

Support is available from school counselors, who should be told about the child's loss regardless of his or her reaction; therapists who specialize in working with grieving children; and religious groups.

In addition, Sharp HospiceCare has special bereavement programs for children. For more information, call **1-800-681-9188**.

**SHARP** Hospice  
Care

P.O. Box 1750  
La Mesa, CA 91944

Address Service Requested

ISSUE **05**

**“Music is a moral law. It gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, a charm to sadness, and life to everything. It is the essence of order, and leads to all that is good, just, and beautiful, of which it is the invisible, but nevertheless dazzling, passionate, and eternal form.”**

— Plato

*bringing comfort to each day*

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## *Healing Through Grief*

*Dear Friend,*

As you know, adjusting to life without your loved one takes a great deal of effort. Reconstructing your life and rediscovering yourself often require changing your daily habits and patterns.

This issue of *Healing Through Grief* will provide you with insight about self-discovery and how to use music and other creative activities to help you through this period of transition.

We're here to help. If you would like to talk about your loss, reactions or concerns, or if you have any questions about our services, call **1-800-681-9188** to speak to a bereavement counselor.

Sincerely yours,  
The Bereavement Department of  
Sharp HospiceCare

### **Sharp HospiceCare Bereavement Support Group**

Sharp HospiceCare offers free support groups for people who have lost a loved one. Discussion topics include common myths about grief and the grieving process; dealing with guilt and depression; and handling special dates and anniversaries. We have groups for adults, teens and children. Formats range from drop-in groups to time-limited sessions.

For more information or to register, please call us at **1-800-681-9188** or visit **sharp.com** (search for "bereavement support groups").

*Habits and Patterns*

When you live with another person, you tend to become physically and emotionally reliant on him or her. You counted on your loved one to be there to listen, solve problems or share your excitement, joys and sadness. He or she was there to help with chores, such as cleaning and yard work. The reality of your loss may intensify as you try to maintain a routine that used to involve your loved one. Over time, you will accept the death and begin to develop new relationship patterns. Experts recommend that you rely on others to help meet your emotional and physical needs.

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Sharp HospiceCare strives to bring comfort to those working through the grieving process. Bereavement counselors provide a supportive, confidential environment for families and friends dealing with the loss of a loved one. To learn more about Sharp HospiceCare, including support groups, call **1-800-681-9188**.



**Reconstructing Your Life**

Many months after the death of your loved one, your pain and confusion may still seem significant, and you may not be aware that you are, in fact, recovering. Your sleeping and eating patterns may start returning to normal. You may find it easier to complete tasks. You may discover that you are having increased moments of pleasure, and interest in hobbies and social activities. Gradually, small changes in your old routines will help you begin to reconstruct your life.

**By keeping yourself busy, you may leave yourself no room to think about or feel pain.**

**Rediscovering Yourself**

You may still identify yourself as someone's spouse or child. Understanding and appreciating your value as an individual play a major part in the journey through grief. Answering the question, "Who am I now?" can be both painful and joyous at the same time. The task of searching for and establishing a new, separate personal identity can surprise you.



A sense of failure, inadequacy or guilt may compel you to prove your worth, especially to yourself, by keeping busy. Be sure to schedule some time to take care of yourself. Doing so not only helps replenish your energy, but also enables you to better understand your feelings. Spend time doing activities you enjoy: watch a favorite movie, read a book, work in the garden. Or just simply take some time to breathe.

**Who Am I?**

"After my son died, I felt like no one needed me. He was so little and counted on my being there for him every day."

As this example illustrates, you may feel that part of you died when your loved one died. It is understandable that your sense of self may be unraveling and you may not understand the person you are now. It takes time to understand and adjust to the change, and to be comfortable with the new person you are becoming. Talking with friends, journaling and meditating are ways to gather together the loose threads.

Reflecting on the following questions may help you gain new insight into how to restructure your life in a way that better fits your changing needs:

- How have my responsibilities changed?
- What new habits and routines have I established?
- Which emotional needs of mine are going unmet as a result of the loss?
- Who can I count on to be there for me?
- Do I adequately seek out potential sources of support in my life?
- What gave me a sense of purpose and satisfaction before?
- What gives me a sense of purpose and satisfaction now?
- Has my image of myself changed?
- What role do I play in how people respond to me and my loss?
- Have my values and beliefs changed?
- How have my priorities changed?
- What have I learned about myself from losing my loved one?
- How am I the same as before my loss, and how am I different?

*Looking Forward and Moving On*

The separation that you experience when someone you love dies may leave you with a sense of futility and hopelessness. You may feel crushed, splintered, broken into pieces and unsure if you will ever be useful or valued again.

Don't be surprised if thoughts such as these cross your mind, as it is common to think, "Wouldn't it be better to be with my loved one?" and "I can't go on feeling so much pain." Thinking about death leads to a greater sense of isolation. Try talking about your feelings with someone you trust.

Gather hope and courage from others. The noted minister and writer Reuben K. Young Dahl wrote: "During the war (WWII), the rose window in the great Rheims cathedral was shattered into bits by an indirect hit. The parishioners lovingly got down on their hands and knees to gather together all the tiny pieces of broken glass. When the war was over, they hired the most skilled workmen available to rebuild it, piece by piece, from the gathered fragments. Today's rose window in Rheims is more beautiful than it ever was."

**"Start by doing what's necessary; then do what's possible; and then suddenly you are doing the impossible."**  
— St. Francis of Assisi

**How Long Will You Drift?**

Being alone and without direction can be frightening. You may question the values and goals you had before the death of your loved one. You may find yourself asking about the meaning of life and wondering, "What should my new direction be?" You may find that feelings of listlessness and self-pity consume your thoughts. You may even be unable to reach out and, as a result, you may plunge deeper into gloom.

Be patient. The healing process takes time. As you work through your grief, you will regain a sense of direction. This time of reflection can help you realize that despite your



pain, you are still capable of growing, giving and loving. Every time you reach out with a small act of caring, you are making progress. As you consciously decide to re-involve yourself with determination and purpose, you will rediscover meaning and answers.

**Be patient. The healing process takes time. As you work through your grief, you will regain a sense of direction.**

*The Gift of Music*

Fully experiencing and expressing grief is the only constructive way to heal, grow and find new meaning in life. Any activity that enables you to more completely feel and express your emotions, thoughts and ideas can be a vehicle for healing.

Music can help you focus your thoughts and stir your creative juices. You can use the music alone or in combination with other expressive activities such as writing, drawing, dancing or exercising. It can get you moving and help release the tension in your body that you may be storing, and it can help you in your journey toward wholeness.

Studies have shown that listening to classical music helps grieving people in a variety of ways, including:

- Promoting healing by relieving stress
- Empowering the listener to resolve inner conflicts and obstacles
- Enhancing concentration, learning and memory retention
- Stimulating creativity and imagination
- Improving problem-solving and decision-making

Be sure to choose music that complements the situation. The following classical suggestions are grouped into various categories based on different actions.

*Waking Up/Facing a New Day*

Grieg, "Peer Gynt" Suite  
Vivaldi, "The Four Seasons"

*Falling Asleep*

Bach, "Air on the G String"  
Debussy, "Clair de Lune"  
Pachelbel, Canon in D

*Relaxing and Relieving Stress*

Beethoven, Symphony No. 6  
Mozart, Concerto for Flute and Harp  
Tchaikovsky, "The Nutcracker" and "Swan Lake"

*Clear Thinking*

Bach, "Brandenburg" Concertos  
Brahms, Violin Concerto

*Calming Anger*

Bach, Two Concertos for Two Pianos  
Dexter, "The Golden Voyage"  
Handel, Harp Concerto

*Relieving Depression*

Beethoven, Piano Concerto No. 5  
Mozart, Symphony No. 5  
Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 2 (last movement)

*Energizing Your Day and Focusing*

Bach, "Brandenburg" Concertos  
Beethoven, Symphonies Nos. 1, 2 and 8  
Smetana, "The Moldau"

*Meditating and Prayer*

Dvořák, Symphony No. 9, "New World"  
Mahler, Symphony No. 4 (third movement)  
Mahler, Symphony No. 7 (second movement)

*Empowerment, Motivation and Assertiveness*

Beethoven, Piano Concerto No. 5  
Mozart, "Eine kleine Nachtmusik" ("A Little Night Music")  
Wagner, "Ride of the Valkyries"

From Hal Lingerman's *The Healing Energies of Music*, and Stephanie Merritt's *Mind, Music and Imagery*

**Conducting to Music**

Conducting can be extremely useful to release stress and negative emotions. It also helps generate energy and motivation. Turn on a piece of energetic music, such as Mozart's "Eine kleine Nachtmusik," and pretend you are a famous conductor. Let your arms and hands move freely to the music. This is a great way to connect with a sense of personal power as well as a safe and constructive outlet for anger, frustration and anxiety, which are common throughout the grieving process.

